



**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 4-2-07\*\*\***

***From the Office of the Director of Health***

### **Take the First Step to Preparing for Pandemic Influenza**

We know our community is at risk for tornadoes, severe weather and public health emergencies, including pandemic influenza – but most of us are simply not prepared to protect ourselves or our families if a disaster strikes. In conjunction with National Public Health Week, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department encourages individuals to “Take the First Step” in preparing for emergencies by attending a special event tomorrow evening.

The event will be held at 6:00 pm April 4<sup>th</sup> at Hammons Heart Institute. Health experts will share information about the history of pandemic influenza, current planning efforts and steps individuals can take to be better prepared.

“Studying the history of pandemic influenza in our nation offers guidance on how we can better prepare for the next one,” says director Kevin Gipson. “Experts estimate approximately 1/3 of our workforce will be unable to work during a pandemic, either because they are ill, or because they are caring for someone else who is ill. This will have a major impact on families, on industry, on our economy and on our community as a whole.”

Utilizing the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services’ (DHSS) program *Ready in 3*, attendees will be encouraged to take three basic steps to prepare for pandemic influenza. The steps include developing a family plan, preparing an emergency supplies kit and knowing where to get credible, local information during a pandemic. Those who attend will also receive free planning materials including a booklet and a DVD, and will be eligible to win one of two *Ready in 3* emergency preparedness starter kits.

The event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

More information on pandemic influenza and *Ready in 3* can be found at <http://health.springfieldmogov.org>.

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